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# Even geeks can be technology-challenged

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Here's an admission that may surprise some people: I've long harboured a deep, hidden fear of having to deal with a certain technology, and I've only recently gotten over it.

That may sound like a foolish statement from a fellow who has been using computer technology since 1981.

It sounds even sillier when you consider that my home features an extensive network of about 18 personal computers and servers. I maintain a Web and e-commerce site, digitally edit and produce videos, and have dug deep into the heart of computer operating systems such as Linux.

The fact is, I'm a geek, and proud of it. So how can I admit that I've struggled with technology?

Because it's true. And my experience is a good example of the struggle that many people face with new technologies on a day-to-day basis. People don't like to admit that they don't know how to use something, and this fact can hold back the implementation of many new business or technology applications.

My problem became apparent over the past several years while travelling with my family. I'd often check into a hotel room with my wife and two young boys, only to be bewitched by a Nintendo or Sega game controller that was part of the room entertainment system. My boys would plead with me to play a game or two. I'd beg off, using that typical parent comment: "We don't have time."

But the fact is, I simply didn't know how to use the device. And I found myself confronted with the need to figure it out. Bottom line? I didn't want to look dumb in front of my kids, nor did I want to admit to them that I didn't know how to make it work.

So I always said no. What a nice dad.

Of course, the pressure grew over time. My boys grew older, went to school, and became friends with other kids who had game-consoles. They were learning what to do, and still, I was in the dark. I mentioned this dilemma one day to some folks at Sega Canada, admitting to them that, as a "high-tech guru," I was, in this area at least, a technological dunderhead. So they arranged to send over a Dreamcaster and games to help me get over it.

Just the other night, I was deep into reading the manual for one game, trying to figure it out and learn the controls. My boys? Way ahead of me, laughing at the fact that I didn't' know what buttons press.

But hey, I'm getting there.

My situation is a microcosm of the struggle that many people have with new technologies, and indeed, much of the challenge is generational. Kids have a good relationship with technology: they plunge right in, pounding away at the keyboard, taking just minutes to figure things out. But many adults have difficulty with even the simplest and most straightforward computer programs. That results in problems adapting to new ways of doing business that are reliant on technology.

If we don't pay attention to that fact in the workplace, then we doom many e-business and technology efforts from the start. Much more attention needs to be paid to the issue of helping people cope.

This means that those designing systems always must be sensitive to the reality that people are challenged by this stuff. Planning for an implementation has to take into account detailed training and any special procedures to help people adapt.

Over all, those who are masters of their technological universe should always recognize that there are those who are not, and be considerate of them.

The world of business will continue to change as the result of a constant flood of new technologies and ways of doing business. Let's do a better job in helping people out there deal with it.

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